

Charles Burnett

Humanism and the Jesuit Mission to China II: A Poetic Biography of Michele Ruggieri, the First Superior of the Jesuit Mission in the Far East

Abstract: This paper is about the Latin poem devoted to the life of Michele Ruggieri S.J. After briefly describing the material context in which it is to be found, it is shown how the poem conforms to humanist style and vocabulary. An English translation of the poem completes the paper.

Keywords: Jesuit, Michele Ruggieri, humanism, China, Vergil

Liceat nostris artes coniungere vestras ('Let your arts join ours'), Poem on Ruggieri, line 241

The Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu includes a very curious Latin hexameter poem of 428 lines devoted to the life of Michele Ruggieri, the first Superior of the Jesuit Mission in the Far East (1543–1607).¹ It is found within a series of documents with the classmark JAP.SIN. 101 I, which are described as *Relationi del successo della missione della Cina (Mich. Ruggiero) dal mese di Nov. 1577 alli 1591*. Among these are a *tractatus compositus . . . pro Philippo II ut legatio in Sinas mittatur* ("a treatise composed . . . for Philip II [king of Spain 1556–1598], that an embassy should be sent to the Chinese"), which includes descriptions of the land of China, the products of the land, and the size of its cities. The text on fols 118v–131 is described as a *Poema quoddam de P. Michaelae Ruggieri compositum a quodam Patre SJ (uti videtur in Collegio Romano)* ("A certain poem about Father Michaelae Ruggieri, composed by a certain Jesuit Father – as it seems, in the Collegio Romano"). The folio numbers are a modern addition, introduced when the various documents were put together. The poem itself has a separate foliation, of which 4r–16r

¹ This article complements the article by Mingguang Xie and Massimiliano Carloni in this volume, which provides a full account of the background to this poem, as well as an edition of the poem itself and a translation into Italian. My work on the poem was pursued independently of the project of Xie and Carloni, as a part of my interest in the humanism of the Jesuit missionaries to the Far East (see Burnett 1996). I am grateful to Xie and Carloni for showing me their article in advance of publication, which has allowed me to correct some errors. I have also benefited from the advice of Yifan Zhang, Qi Han, Marisa Addomine, and Lucy Nicholas.

show that it was a self-contained unit (perhaps with a loose binding accounting for the absence of fols 1–3r).²

A note in Italian (in different hands³) precedes the poem:

Perilché un nostro Padre compose questo poema per maggior dechiaratione del sudetto caso l'ho perciò voluto metter' qui come si segue ("Since one of our Fathers composed this poem for a better explanation of the aforementioned case I decided to put it here as follows").

The significance of the first inscription is not obvious (the writer could be a Chinese or Japanese Jesuit from Macau, who had to learn Portuguese). The second note clearly refers to the poem that follows, that the writer of the note has copied without giving the name of the author.

The poem is an encomium, addressed to Michele Ruggieri at the height of his career. Several 'set pieces' alternate with narrative and direct speech:

- 1) A statement of the topic of the poem ("the deeds of the holy man . . . who first penetrated the unapproached shores of China"): lines 1–6;
- 2) Direct speech: An appeal for God's (Jesus and the Virgin's) help in writing the poem: lines 7–14;
- 3) Set piece: A description of China (its modern name, its size, its fifteen constituent kingdoms, each with 100 cities; its fertility and the wealth of its natural resources; its huge population, ruled by a single emperor, continuously increasing as a result of the law that no one is allowed to leave the country; its hard-working inhabitants): lines 15–49;
- 4) Set piece: China's beauty, epitomised in an image of 'Father Autumn' (the season in which the poem was written?): lines 50–94;
- 5) Narrative: The absence of the true faith: lines 95–110;
- 6) Speech: Ruggieri has pity on the Chinese and determines to go to China: 111–154;
- 7) Set piece: A storm at sea and consequent shipwreck: lines 155–167;
- 8) Narrative: Ruggieri escapes and goes to Macau: lines 168–173;
- 9) Set piece: Macau is described: lines 174–177;
- 10) Narrative: Ruggieri meets his fellow Jesuits, with whom he tries to devise a means of entering China: lines 178–211;
- 11) Narrative: Ruggieri devises a plan by which to enter China as a merchant (offering the free gift of the Christian faith rather than merchandise) and obtain a house for the Jesuits: lines 212–227;

² I am indebted to Stefan Bauer for the transcription and translation of this Italian passage.

³ This appears to have been written in the same hand as the poem.

- 12) Speech: Ruggieri speaks before the ruler and asks to be given a house where the Jesuits can stay: lines 228–251;
- 13) Narrative: The ruler agrees to Ruggieri's request, and orders that the Jesuits should be given a house, where the missionaries are visited by many people: lines 252–275;
- 14) Narrative: A Chinese man unsuccessfully tries to bring disgrace onto Ruggieri: lines 276–348;
- 15) Narrative: Ruggieri chooses a companion for his mission, and his books are printed in Chinese for the promulgation of faith: lines 349–358;
- 16) Speech: Ruggieri tells his companion how important it is to go to the Middle Kingdoms of China: 359–377;
- 17) Narrative: Ruggieri goes to Zhaoqing, where he gives a clock to the ruler and is granted permission to build a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in return: 378–410;
- 18) Set piece: Future salvation is assured by these events: lines 411–428.

The poem was written during Ruggieri's lifetime, because, in its final words, it encourages Ruggieri to continue to do the fine missionary work that he has begun (*insiste secundis / interea cæptis*, lines 425–426). If we trust the superscript, the poem was written in the Jesuit Collegium Romanum in Rome and may have been presented to Ruggieri when he was in Rome and at this college (from June 1590) and still expected to return to China. The poem is totally positive towards Ruggieri and does not hint at the criticisms of Ruggieri from his fellow Jesuits – about being weak, not sufficiently fluent in spoken Chinese, and not being a good leader – which led to him being sent back to Europe.

The drama of this poem is ensured by the variation between descriptions (set pieces), narrative and direct speeches. The poem encapsulates the high level of Latin composition that distinguishes Jesuit learning. For example, the annual performances at Jesuit schools both in Europe and in the fields of mission were entirely in Latin, and consisted of dramatic performances and the writing of poems, as well as enigmas which the students were supposed to solve.⁴ The dramas and poems were full of references to Classical mythology, whose contemporary significance was meant to be understood by the reader or (as is more likely) the reciter and audience. Examples from this poem include (the line numbers are given):

Regnator Olympi (7): the Christian Triune God;

Titan (21, 198): the Sun;

⁴ Burnett (1996). The numbers in the following references refer to the line numbers of the poem.

Boreas (23): the North Wind;

Massageta and *Scythia* (24): both individuals of the ancient peoples of Central Asia;

Notus (25): the South Wind;

Lycus (73): a river in ancient Phrygia;

Berecynthia (88): an adjective applied to Cybele, the mother of Hermes;

Acheron (120): a river of Hades.

Various names for the fates are given: the three *Erinyes* (sing. *Eryn(n)is/Erinye* [165]), two of which are *Magaera* (276) and *Tisiphone* (278);

Orcus (184): the god of the underworld;

Stygius Avernus (284) and *Avernus* (299, 340): the entrance to the underworld;

Hircanus (317): Hyrcanian, from a region in Northern Iran.

Ruggieri gives Classical forms to places and officials unknown in the Classical period: Macau gives rise to the adjectives both *Machaus* (174) and *Amacanus* (175). In the case of China itself, he substitutes a 'name used by the people' for the Classical name: *Cina* for *Sina* (16–17). But *Sina* (151) and *Cina* (4, 369), are both used for the name of the country, and *Cina* (193), *Sina* (189, 234, 389) and *Syna* (388) are also used as ethnic nouns (a "Chinese"). *Sericus* (75) and *Sina* (353 and 355) also occur as adjectives;

Calecutia (134): Calicut in Kerala;

xifones (*sacerdotes*, 204): "shifu" (teacher) (師傅/師傅);

Cantonium (216) with the adjective *Cantonius* (192 and 219): Canton, of Canton;

Sciauchinum (389): Zhaoqing (肇慶);

Tutanus (391, 394, 396): du tang (督堂) 都堂.

There are many direct allusions to Vergil, of which the most obvious is the first line (*Gesta cano sacrumque virum, qui primus ab arce / Romulea*) which deliberately recalls the beginning of the narrative of the *Aeneid*: *Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris*. . . . In both cases the poet provides a summary of the action of the poem.

But other lines are also taken from Vergil: verses 272–273 (*ingentem populant formicae farris acervum, it campo nigrans agmen, quo semita fervet*) repeat the ant simile in *Aen.* 4.402–407: *ac velut ingentem formicae farris acervum . . . it nigrum campis agmen . . . opere omnis semita fervet*. Verse 316 (*Subito aut quae me dementia cepit*) repeats Vergil's *Georgics* (*G.*), 4.487: *cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem*. The next two verses (317–318. *Hircanae me lactavere leaenae? / Nec mihi crudeles admorunt ubera tygres*) expand into two the single verse of *Aen.* 4.367: *Hircanaeque admorunt ubera tigres*.

Other Vergilian phrases are: *Regnator Olympi* (7): *Aen.* 10.437; *positum de marmore templum* (12): *templum de marmore ponam*, *G.* 3.13; *atra patebit /ianua Ditis* (118–19): *atri ianua Ditis*, *Aen.* 6.127; *laniato e corpore* (125): *atque hic Priamiden laniatum corpore toto*, *Aen.* 6.494; *duplices tendens ad sidera palmas* (142): *Aen.* 1.93; *faucibus Orci* (184): *Aen.* 6.273; *superasque evadere ad auras* (185): *Aen.* 6.128; *dixit et ingemuit pressoque obmutuit ore* (330): *dixit pressoque obmutuit ore*, *Aen.* 6.155; *non mihi si linguae centum* (417): *Aen.* 6.624; *ferrea . . . vox* (417): *Aen.* 6.626; *manibus lilia plenis* (420): *manibus date lilia plenis*, *Aen.* 6.883. The set piece on a storm at sea (155–67) recalls *Aen.* 1.82–91 (*agmine facto* and *turbine* appear in both texts).

The imitation of Vergil throughout the poem is deliberate: Ruggieri's life has to be placed in the same epic dimension as Aeneas's. While the whole poem is about the bringing of a salvific Christianity to the Chinese, Christian terminology and echoes of the Bible and the liturgy are strikingly absent. Rather, the poet takes words and phrases from Vergil whenever possible, so that the poem becomes a pastiche of the *Aeneid* and *Georgics*.

Other classical writers make occasional entries:

Servius:

Sabæorum . . . thure (14): *Sabaeorum gens eadem est, apud quam tus nascitur* (Serv., *ad G.* 2.115);

Sedulius:

tumideque procellae (129): *tumidis procellis* (Sed. Scot., *Carm.* 45.58–59);

Cicero:

importunique latrones (132): *importunissimos latrones* (Cic., *Fam.* 12.12.2);

Ausonius:

arbiter aevi (145): Aus., *Ecl.* 4.10;

and Statius:

Accumulat subito turbatrix fama furores (293): *accumulat turbatrix fama pavores* (Stat., *Theb.* 4.369).

Alea iam iacta est (135) ('The die is cast') is a widely used proverbial phrase.

The author uses repetition for effect:

Undique. . . undique (53, 54);

Moriar, moriar (127);

Hic. . . hic (56, 57);

Ergo (115, 118, 121, 124);

Cernis ut. . . (157, 160 and 161).

He employs the poetic licence of altering the usual order of words (*omnia sed* 61; *hos inter* 112; *Nulla sed arma Deum contra* 296; *haec ergo inter* 383) and missing out the copula. Connecting words are sparingly used.

For an edition of the poem from the sole manuscript witness (AHSI, JAP.SIN. 101 I, fols 118r–131r = original foliation 3v–16r), see Carloni and Xie in this volume. The following English translation reproduces the Latin text quite literally, so bringing out the Classical flavour of the poem.

- 1 /3v/ I sing of the deeds and the holy man who,
- 2 persuaded by the sacred council of the elders,
- 3 and having suffered much through the seething angers of the wild sea,
- 4 first penetrated the unapproached shores of China from the citadel of Romulus,
- 5 certain either of helping that wretched race at last,
- 6 or of giving up a life mixed with blood for Christ.
- 7 Meanwhile, you are present here, ruler of high Olympus,
- 8 whose thrice-sacred and noble name he bore
- 9 and revealed the Sacred Spirit on barbarian shores.
- 10 Look kindly on these humble and daring attempts!
- 11 /4r/ You also, powerful Virgin, provide strength and spirit
- 12 to the singer! For a temple of marble erected for you
- 13 rises there for the first time, and, now that gifts have been heaped up from everywhere,
- 14 the tended altars smoke with Sabaeen incense.
- 15 A region of the far <East> of Asia is most famous –
- 16 once ‘of the Sinae’, but which now, with a changed name,
- 17 is popularly called ‘China’ – than which no region is seen to be greater throughout the spread-out world,
- 18 or more widely fertile with fields heavy <with crops>,
- 19 which is adjacent to the dawn risings of the blazing Sun,
- 20 and receives the heaving waves with the blowings of the Ocean,
- 21 which sees Titan immerse his chariots in the sea;
- 22 and touches the Indies with just a small bit of intervening land;
- 23 where Boreas rages, nourished by the cold north;
- 24 it is surrounded by the weapons of the Massagete and wild Scythian,
- 25 where Notus (the South wind) rages from the opposite <end of> the axis of Boreas;
- 26 and matches the citadels native to the Chinese with <the height of its> waves.
- 27 /4v/ A land mighty in men, wealth, cattle, cities, fields

28 and rivers, and blessed with gold and other metals;
 29 lofty, proud, it hides its shining head among the clouds.
 30 It rules over fifteen vast and most celebrated kingdoms,
 31 each of which determines the laws and regulations for 100 cities,
 32 but it obeys one lord and overall rulership.
 33 The cities protect themselves with walls which are high and
 34 strong, bound by a new <kind of> bond with a regular series of bulwarks
 35 such as even Babylon did not see, nor did age-old antiquity.
 36 The huge number of the populace is not equalled by the seething of
 the deep,
 37 or the waves thrown up by the sea, which the shore drinks in.
 38 Neither the grasses of spring nor the stars of the sky equal <that number>.
 39 The fertile vine does not put forth so many tendrils in fresh spring,
 40 or provide in autumn so many swelling grapes.
 41 Not so many monsters cut through the sea, not so many Attic
 42 honeycombs are collected, not so many yellow crops does Gargara pour
 fourth,
 43 as China bears and enjoys men, being blessed throughout the ages.
 44 /5r/ And it is no wonder. For emigration was once forbidden to the inhabitants
 45 by the law of the kings, nor was it allowed to go outside the boundaries,
 46 which favouring fortune and <conquering> arms gave to <their> fathers.
 47 Here, all cultivate their fields; no one is allowed to rest,
 48 but idleness is punished by the law of the land;
 49 the race have such a desire to sweat over hard labour.
 50 This is the first distinction of China. Why should I mention the rest?
 51 The gold-bearing mountains, and the rivers fecund with gems,
 52 the golden yellow sands adjacent to the shore.
 53 Everywhere the fertile forest pours forth scented aromas;
 54 everywhere the gentle stream chatters with a pleasant murmur,
 55 suitable for the needs of both men and wild animals.
 56 Here, perpetual spring diffuses sweet scents.
 57 Here, beautiful summer is vibrant with a three-fold harvest,
 58 and nowhere does a tree shed its perpetual foliage.
 59 Ugly winter does not grow stiff here; nor is the cold excessive.
 60 Nor does the field grow weak, tired out with continuous rain.
 61 /5v/ But all things smile, all things give joyful applause.
 62 Here, Father Autumn sits, his forehead and ruddy temples
 63 shine, adorned with heavy tendrils;
 64 The Phoenician apples then cover his unkempt hair.
 65 Pears, walnuts and chestnuts, and peaches with the fold at the back,

66 and the coconut, mixed into his rough palms with a new order (?) –
 67 all these things are borne by this one happy earth.
 68 Here, colorful birds sing a variety of songs
 69 with clear voices. Each of their delights charms the senses,
 70 Nor do you look for entertainment in vain.
 71 What of the rivers, smooth in their flow, and the perpetual springs?
 72 What of the earth, very rich in waters? From her <flow> one hundred
 rivers
 73 not inferior to the Ganges, the Lycus, or the Tigris.
 74 They are fit for sailing; there is nothing they do not carry and bring from
 city to city.
 75 On them the greedy merchant conveys wools, pale silks with red threads,
 76 and pelts sought from another world,
 77 and he carries porcelains most fit for the tables of Kings;
 78 and new honey; from here, rhubarb
 79 /6r/ and sugar, dyer's woad fit for dying clothes, and
 80 a huge amount of musk is poured out into the rest of the world.
 81 But its confines (?) are satisfied with the fruit found <on the spot>
 82 and it requires for its wealth nothing from outside.
 83 Yet the race excels in intelligence, whether it behoves to hold in the mind
 84 The stars of the sky – the time they become hidden, the time they rise –
 85 or to investigate the hidden wonders of nature,
 86 or to turn the spheres of the heavens, to circumscribe the huge earth
 87 into measured spaces and various regions;
 88 how Berecynthia, sitting on a gold chariot,
 89 with her high head crowned with a turreted diadem,
 90 on this side kindly distributes wealth, like an abundance from a full horn,
 91 on that side tames the fierce necks of lions with reins.
 92 And thus she triumphs, carried through innumerable cities.
 93 China, bearing such souls, inserts her head in the stars,
 94 while she joyfully shows off her own triumphal honours.
 95 But false superstition, ignorant of true piety,
 96 keeps in darkness such a fortunate race, and one blessed with
 97 /6v/ the gifts of heaven and enjoying a wonderful fruitfulness of the soil,
 98 and makes it wretched and lacking heaven,
 99 and one thing takes away the beauty which all things promise for that race:
 100 that the ignorant race is affected here by a Stygian poison;
 101 it rushes into every forbidden scandal; it profanes all sacred things.
 102 Some, O poor people! worship the heavens as the highest deity,
 103 some worship animals in unheard-of forms:

104 Gorgons, Scyllas, and portentous chimaeras,
 105 and what Africa, the parent of monsters, has been accustomed to bring
 forth.
 106 Some worship mute stones, shapeless rocks,
 107 others, long trunks devoid of bark,
 108 others worship, in their country's tradition, statues of their parents
 109 perfected by the hand of craftsmen, having dedicated temples and altars
 to them.
 110 Such night and ignorance oppress their blind minds.
 111 Therefore, when Michele Ruggieri, one among those
 112 whom the sacred name of 'Jesus' marks out,
 113 considers these things, he grieves, having pity on the unfair lot of the race.
 114 /7r/ He says these things, intermingled with deep sighs:
 115 «Shall I, therefore, allow so many people, born for better ages,
 116 shall I allow such a fortunate race, so many flourishing
 117 kingdoms, to pass their lives ignorant of God?
 118 Will the grim door of Pluto, therefore, still lie open for so many
 119 and will dire plague and devouring flame be vomited from
 120 an ill-fated mouth deep under the Acheron?
 121 Will the dreadful Author of so many ills,
 122 go away from there unrevenged, and most dreadfully drag off
 123 to his kingdom an immense booty of men, to be measured in terms of ages?
 124 Are so many travails by Christ, therefore, so many toils
 125 undertaken, <so much> blood from a lacerated body,
 126 lost by the studies of the underworld and the art of the Dragon?
 127 Should I not suffer and die – die? No dangers
 128 will delay the journey, nor great rivers, nor storms,
 129 nor the dreadful clamour of the sea, nor blustering gales;
 130 nor will the mountain peaks of Asia, piercing the heavens and the impacted
 snows
 131 /7v/ draw me back; nor will the bears or the savage raging of lions,
 132 or bold robbers take away <the journey>. Why do they throw at me <as
 objections>
 133 fierce tigers, why the fearful ranks of wild animals,
 134 why the deserts of Goa, why those of Calicut?
 135 The die is now cast; this decision remains in my mind:
 136 either to show the true salvation of death to the wretched,
 137 and to indicate the law sent down from heaven to be obeyed,
 138 or to consume a fragile life there in travails.
 139 Enough of my homeland and Italians! I will think that I have lived

140 well enough, if I have lived so many months among the Chinese.»
 141 Scarcely had the hero <spoken>, when he threw himself before the altars
 142 and, stretching two suppliant palms to the stars, he said:
 143 «O all-powerful Father, who rule alone in the world.
 144 You powerfully guide the reins of earth and heaven,
 145 the same being creator, ruler and judge of eternity,
 146 accept, I pray, with open ears, the prayers I pour out to you.
 147 If I seek worthy things, give them to me, Father, and may I now complete
 148 /8r/ what an ardent mind conceives. Give a response to the one who seeks,
 149 and fulfilment of the high commands that have now been revealed to me.»
 150 The ears of the Gods had scarcely given assent to the pious voices
 151 when, immediately, Michele took up his journey to China (so the divinities
 command).
 152 He prepares a happy course, with a favouring heaven,
 153 the strong ships are boarded and released from the shore,
 154 the Italian land is left behind, the shore recedes.
 155 You, now, Muse, tell us what travails he bore from here on.
 156 Do you see the rains pouring down and the powerful storms,
 157 how the blind anger of the winds rages across the sea?
 158 With what whirling they blow over the land and, as if forming a battle-line
 159 raise hateful and teeming waves up to the stars?
 160 Do you see how the noisy storm carries the boat
 161 into the shallows? Do you see how the scattered crossbeams,
 162 the boards and the oak-beams of the broken mast float on top of the swollen
 seas?
 163 How many bodies everywhere, shipwrecked,
 164 bob on the foaming deep, playthings of the waves, and the carcass of the ship?
 165 /8v/ Doubtless a gloomy Erynis had annoyed Ocean,
 166 to terrify the Father, now hurrying to overturn her signs (?)
 167 and to drown him as he progressed through the middle of the waves.
 168 Rescued from these, Michele, as he sees greater things await him,
 169 prepares himself. Soon, he crosses the furious waters,
 170 and the swelling rivers which have burst their banks.
 171 He goes over the airy mountains, where no path can be seen,
 172 and scorns their threats, and he straightway
 173 ploughs the deep, and arrives on the shores of the Macaoans.
 174 Macao is a port, a very safe haven for the Spanish fleet.
 175 This is the first <port> to offer itself to those seeking
 176 the Chinese kingdoms, and is not far separated from the first city
 177 in the Chinese land, which an Iberian soldier protects.

178 Here he finds others which the same religion nourishes
 179 from a single breast and has instructed in the bonds of sweet life.
 180 He had known these <men> earlier on Western shores.
 181 There is celebration; everywhere they like to hug each other,
 182 /9r/ and, as new torches are lit, the fervour mounts.
 183 They debate how they can help China,
 184 so that so many mortals condemned to the jaws of Hell,
 185 might be able to learn virtue, and emerge into the upper airs,
 186 and be able to acknowledge the eternal descendants of God.
 187 The Fathers see that many obstacles stand in the way; but what seemed
 188 to render vain all their hopes and cares was something more unjust:
 189 once the rulers of the Chinese – whether compelled by
 190 the evil wiles of the Demon, or because they feared
 191 their neighbours' arms – ordered that no foreigner should be allowed
 192 to penetrate within the walls of Canton, which sealed
 193 the narrow passages into China, and that, whoever infringed <this law>
 194 should be put to death. When a foreigner has been ordered to trade and
 195 stay there, not only is he not able to visit the interior of the kingdom
 196 but also he cannot spend a night in the city.
 197 For he is forced to retrace his steps, and return to the awaiting ships as
 198 Titan (the Sun), exhausted, has turned round his axis.
 199 No medicine seemed to be able to be prepared for such great
 200 /9v/ evils, when entry had been denied and doctors kept away.
 201 What could the Fathers do? By what power could they pass through
 202 unknown frontiers, full of a large military presence?
 203 Whither, in this situation, could their hard work, or force, carry them?
 204 Add the priests (they call them 'Xifones'),
 205 and devotees of the gods, who are in thrall
 206 to lust for gold, greed, and desires inimical to the chaste.
 207 Finally, the fertility of the lush land was an obstacle,
 208 and the evils drawn up with the liquid drafts of honey.
 209 But do these <evils> delay the spirit of the hero in the face of the
 210 supreme help of the Supporter to whom the whole world is subject?
 211 Surely God has not been wont to be absent from such great enterprises?
 212 Here Michele thought over many things with himself,
 213 and turned every stone, when a new idea arose.
 214 For, at three turnings of the moon every year
 215 a foreign merchant is allowed to enter Canton at will,
 216 whether he wishes to exhibit merchandise to sell,
 217 or to export with him elsewhere merchandise that he has bought.

218 /10r/ The merchant of men joins this <merchant> with a favourable divine
 spirit,
 219 and soon carries new merchandise <to display> in the city of Canton
 220 which – if you ask the price – should be sold
 221 for love only. «Oh China, if you knew the man or the merchandise carried
 within the walls,
 222 you would fly to the poured-out booty
 223 and you would buy the jewel that would be valuable for all time.»
 224 Therefore, as soon as our merchant makes for the city,
 225 like a javelin he is borne into the hall of the Praetor
 226 (the people call him the Mandarin), and he stands before the high tribunal,
 227 and thus he speaks to him, with an intrepid breast:
 228 «Hale, nobleman, worthy of generous honour!
 229 You who hold the reins <of power> over such a great people, most pleas-
 ing to
 230 them; in whose hand is the empire and, by fate, the royal power,
 231 may the all-powerful king of heaven favour you for long
 232 centuries, and make you be the father of a happy progeny!
 233 While the very great realms of Western Latium detained me,
 234 the great glory of the Chinese often came to my ears –
 235 /10v/ its riches, the infinite abundance of things.
 236 Here, with how many honours, kind virtue, piety
 237 and the arts are adorned, is told both at the cross-roads
 238 and where the shore of the sea resounds with a deep throbbing.
 239 For this reason, having navigated the Ocean, a massive zeal
 240 has led me through a thousand dangers to these fortunate shores,
 241 so that your arts can join ours and, whatever Muses
 242 Latium cultivates, can be woven into yours.
 243 Now, if I beg for worthy things, through you, most kind ruler,
 244 may I be allowed to live here, to establish a small home here.
 245 It is not a blind desire for silver that has brought me here,
 246 the dazzle of gold has not seized me, nor the Indian gem
 247 or a hope for gain and a never-to-be-satisfied desire for money
 248 which often drags mortal men, unprotected, into the sea.
 249 Water will be enough for thirst; a thin woollen cloak will cover the limbs;
 250 rice will drive away hunger; the earth will provide a bed.
 251 Nothing more; no reprehensible concern for myself will affect me.»
 252 /11r/ When he had said these words, breathing out a divine passion
 253 in his breast, and displaying the nobility of piety in his expression,
 254 he immediately fixed his starry eyes to the ground.

255 The ruler, admiring the man, his lowered face,
 256 and the wit of his words, first urges him with friendly words:
 257 then, he asks in order: what he did, who he is, from what city he has come,
 258 which fine arts does he excel in,
 259 what goes on in that place from which he has left for new shores,
 260 what <divinity> do they worship, what law of the land do they enjoy.
 261 He enjoys repeatedly hearing the <Father> speaking, and often asking him
 <questions>.
 262 At last he orders that a base in the city should be given to the Father
 263 immediately, and he condemns to death anyone who dares to weave
 264 a deceit against him, or to attempt any danger at any time.
 265 Forthwith, in the whole city, young and old,
 266 and a crowd of women, aroused by the now shining fame <of the Father>
 rush <to see him>.
 267 This novel event is seen: that a Father, having been driven by the waves
 268 onto their shores, had placed a base in the middle of the city, by the assent
 of the elders.
 269 /11v/ Here people follow each other in succession, seeking different things,
 270 and the small house is overrun <with visitors> night and day;
 271 and just as in early summer happy ants in a great mass
 272 demolish a huge pile of grain;
 273 they advance over the field, as a black mass which makes the path seethe,
 274 and the first give way to the others, and show the way to those who follow,
 275 and they urge those behind to enter the house.
 276 What, meanwhile, do you do, O wild head of Megaera,
 277 who possesses a thousand names for and a thousand ways of harming?
 278 What do you do, Tisiphone? What <do you do>, you harmful crowd of
 Sisters?
 279 What do you do, you monsters, surrounded by poisonous serpents?
 280 Do you react in this way <to the fact that> all things from the mind of the
 Father succeed?
 281 I don't think so. Behold, while a crowd makes their way into the narrow
 confines
 282 of your house, urged on by their desires to see the priest,
 283 by the prompting of the Demon, and driven by unjust furies,
 284 a certain villain, already a devotee of the Stygian Underworld,
 285 thrice and four times hit his dreadful head with a blow of a hard stone
 286 /12r/ and draws out (O crime!) the hateful and despicable gore,
 287 and secretly enters the house, which he desecrates with his own blood.

288 Coming out in full view, he claims to the citizens that an extreme and lamentable fate
 289 has befallen <him>: that the helpless Father, whom they had just now begun to extol
 290 with so many honours, had inflicted the wounds on him with a sword.
 291 This should not be tolerated in any way
 292 and this outrage cannot be avenged except by the blood of the Father.
 293 Suddenly, crowd-forming rumour heaps up the rage
 294 and, filling the citizens with hatred and bold spirits,
 295 it rages in the whole city and is carried to the ears of the Praetor.
 296 But no arms <can prevail> against God. Virtue remains most secure
 297 everywhere, although the world, cracking apart, totters.
 298 The intrigues of the dire Sisters have no power, having been uprooted
 299 from their position; nor whatever number of wiles Avernus devises <have power>.
 300 Virtue alone is enough for itself; she alone protects herself.
 301 The Father is placed, then, in front of the tribunal of the Mandarin,
 302 whom a great crowd accompanied, wanting to scrutinize the crime.
 303 /12v/ He is asked whether he had committed such a great crime, and dared
 304 to profane sacred hands with a brother's blood.
 305 At first Michele was dumbstruck: he is amazed by the deed
 306 inspired by the Stygian dragon. Then he begins to speak with the following words:
 307 «Since I am now accused of a dreadful crime, honoured President,
 308 and am ordered to plead my case,
 309 if you do not scorn to accommodate the true words I say to your ears that are ready to hear,
 310 I call to witness Heaven and the planets, and you, divinities
 311 who guard our empire, and you,
 312 celestial souls, who lead an eternal life,
 313 and I swear and bear witness: if my mind, now conscious of such a great crime,
 314 pours life into these fragile limbs,
 315 what cause, I pray, could have forced me into such a misdeed?
 316 Or what madness suddenly took hold of me?
 317 The Hircanian lionesses did not, I think, give suck to me?
 318 nor did the cruel tigers move their breasts towards me
 319 so that boldly I would thrust a sword into the heart of my brother.
 320 /13r/ Have I come to these shores, wandering through a thousand dangers,

321 to seize the joyful breath of life from mortals?
 322 Or rather to restore the true life with the true light,
 323 so that the city can be heaped up with every honour?
 324 But what am I doing? Why do I bear more? Why should I have
 325 the divine spirits as witnesses? Could my reason for living and nature
 326 have committed such a crime? But come, good judge,
 327 now I stand happily before your judging tribunal.
 328 If any vestiges of that crime that has been committed remain, I am here,
 329 I am readily available to pay penalties befitting such a crime.»
 330 He spoke, and he sighed, and became silent with his mouth tight shut.
 331 A discrete modesty added trust to the words
 332 as well as the piety of the Father and eyes breathing out sacred honour,
 333 and now the very well-known virtue of the man.
 334 Hence the judge, holding onto fairness, surprised at the unfair
 335 act of the impostor, from his high throne began in this way:
 336 «Fear not, Michael; now clear your breast from worries,
 337 /13v/ I, at least, do not believe that you have lapsed into such crimes.
 338 The traces of such a crime do not lie hidden from me;
 339 nor the deceit of the vain mind of the scoundrel.
 340 I know the man, I remember, he is the scoundrel from crafty Avernus;
 341 hated in equal measure by those seated above and below.
 342 I know the wiles which he does by night and day, which he turns on all
 those
 343 who are different from him, so that one and the same fate drags off everyone.
 344 Therefore, put fear aside, concentrate on fortunate initiatives.
 345 Life itself sufficiently indicates to me the man and his character.»
 346 When these words had been passed round repeatedly among the gathering
 of learned men,
 347 the Father is released and he is honoured in the huge city,
 348 and soon the lies fabricated by base deceit become obvious.
 349 Hence, after the prayers owed to the high Thunderer
 350 have been made, then Michael, with the permission of the President,
 351 calls to himself one of the colleagues who by chance were in the nearest
 place,
 352 <as a> colleague and ally in his works.
 353 /14r/ And now the Chinese races compete with each other in reproducing
 his words,
 354 and dare to assign to type the little books that he had composed,
 355 by which the increases in faith, published in the Chinese language,

356 are handed down to men to be inspected, so that they might discern the
 impious
 357 doctrines which they had drunk in from from their boyhood, and follow
 correct doctrine.
 358 Great hope of a rich crop seemed to be promised.
 359 Here, Michael <said> to his companion: «Dear companion,
 360 honoured with new souls, I do not see that these first fruits
 361 will have useless outcomes. It is fitting that this good fortune
 362 should give life to greater things; she summons what <good>
 363 auspices should follow them (?). For, one should not
 364 hesitate to go to the Middle Kingdoms. What is not reachable by such a fate?
 365 Rather, a happy lot favours our first entry.
 366 Nor, do I think, every hinge of faith turns <only> here.
 367 The greatest harvest, you should believe, will not depend on this city,
 368 but from the Middle City, where the royal houses arise,
 369 and which the leaders and famous dynasties of China inhabit.
 370 /14v/ The faith taken up there will penetrate into the other cities.
 371 For it embraces the example of the king of the world,
 372 and (his) house always becomes very similar to <the house> of Peter.
 373 But the job and the task from here is to press on to the city of the king,
 374 and to level to the ground and overturn the first tower.
 375 The preparation for such a task should not, however, be despised.
 376 For, great things increase in a small number of hours.
 377 It is right that the origin of such a great work has been taken from here».
 378 While, therefore, the Father turns his anxious mind to asking
 379 whether there was a better chance for penetrating China,
 380 a less expected hour at last brought him the desired entrance.
 381 Fulfilling <the task of> what should be given to rulers, the Father
 382 had brought gifts which were reserved for this purpose.
 383 Among these <gifts>, therefore, was a solar index of the hours
 384 shining with gems and gold, elaborated by various arts,
 385 which, having divided the day into
 386 twelve parts, sings almost each time with a clear sound,
 387 /15r/ being driven by a wheel and moving continuously.
 388 The Chinese had never seen anything like this in the world.
 389 Michael, then, going towards Zhaoqing – this most celebrated
 390 city of China is more than 100 stades from the shore –
 391 he grants this gift to the Tutanus who lived in that city,
 392 who alone is allowed to bend the people to (his) rule.

393 Then he adds in a few (words) what he desires, and says the same thing
 394 in front of the Tutanus as he had said in the presence of the President.
 395 The Tutanus is amazed by the offered work, having admired the art included
 396 in it and the ingeniousness of Europe;
 397 he happily turns his eyes now in this direction, now in that,
 398 noting every individual thing, seeing now a multiple series of wheels
 399 in a small orb, now the intervals of the sun
 400 being divided by a certain weight, and, as if a spirit
 401 was put inside which, alive, moved it into all hours,
 402 <he sees them> frequently change their direction and agitated by different
 movements,
 403 and almost replicate the courses of the heavens.
 404 Hence, made worthy of a magnificent gift, he first
 405 thanked him honourably with words, for the moment,
 406 /15v/ and he heaps the Father with his own gifts, and persists when he re-
 fuses them
 407 but soon there was great thanks for the gift.
 408 He ordered that Michael be given a house in that city
 409 and he permitted him to build a sacred little chapel of the Virgin,
 410 in which he might worship the celestials with divine honours.
 411 This first hope, therefore, certain of a future harvest,
 412 presented itself and this alone gives nourishment to the oppressed inhabitants.
 413 Why, then, should I mention here the people gathering from all directions?
 414 Why should I relate the first steps of our noble faith?
 415 The men now saved by the sacred font,
 416 the seeds of true piety scattered everywhere?
 417 Not if I had a hundred tongues, if my voice was of iron,
 418 would I be able to relate these. The hour that has passed calls me back.
 419 I follow. It helps to make an end to these (words). I yield.
 420 Meanwhile, young men, give lilies with full hands.
 421 It helps to give movement to this festive day. The shore, proud of its
 wealth,
 422 powerful in possessions, now adores the true divinity;
 423 it throws to the ground the unspeakable monsters like a furious beast,
 424 /16r/ and it is more and more joined with the sheepfold of the elect.
 425 But you, Oh magnanimous Hero, persist in the fortunate things
 426 already begun. Do them, honoured one, and perfect <them>,
 427 so that all the minds, bound in a dark night of errors,

428 might rise from the darkness to the light of a brilliant life.

I have spoken
Praise be to God and the Virgin Mary!

Bibliography

Burnett (1996): Charles Burnett, "Humanism and the Jesuit Mission to China: The case of Duarte de Sande (1547–1599)", in: *Euphrosyne*, n.s., 24, 425–471.